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Pakistan has bomb triggers, network says

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Pakistan has obtained U.S.-made electronic triggers to set off nuclear bombs and has successfully carried out tests in a non-nuclear explosion, ABC News reported yesterday.

John Scali, an ABC correspondent who was a White House aide from 1971 to 1973 and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations from 1973 to 1975, said the CIA learned that Pakistan had acquired some krytrons, the U.S.-made nuclear triggers, "for use at its super-secret nuclear complex ... 20 miles from the capital, Islamabad."

"Further, U.S. intelligence has evidence that last month Pakistani scientists successfully tested the firing mechanism, producing a non-nuclear explosion," he said.

U.S. officials were concerned, he said: "Pakistan is still one or two years away from completing a nuclear bomb, but they [the officials] acknowledge that with this development Pakistan has moved a big step closer."

U.S. authorities in Houston last November quietly deported a Pakistani businessman on charges of illegally trying to ship 50 krytrons to Pakistan. Nazir Ahmed Vaid, who was said to have links with the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, was convicted and deported for violating U.S. export law.

When the deportation became public in February, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Ejaz Azim, said that his government "has absolutely nothing to do with this individual" and that Pakistan's nuclear program was "entirely peaceful."

The CIA declined to comment on the ABC story. State Department spokesman Robert Smalley also refused.